

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01  
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15  
USIA-06 MCT-01 A-01 OPR-02 SY-05 /080 W  
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R 161540Z FEB 78  
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0021  
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMEMBASSY RABAT  
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TUNIS 1220

E.O.11652: GDS  
TAGS: PFOR TS  
SUBJ: TOUR D'HORIZON WITH HABIB BOURGUIBA, JR.

1. SUMMARY: IN AN HOUR'S CONVERCATION WITH HABIB BOURGUIBA, JR. FEBRUARY 15, HE TOLD ME HE SEES THE LOCAL SECURITY SITUATION RETURNING SOON TO NORMAL AND BELIEVED STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS WERE BEING CONTAINED. HE EXPRESSED UNHAPPINESS OVER SOCIAL-DEMOCRAT MESTIRI'S SPEAKING TOUR IN THE US, DENIGRATED MESTIRI'S "LIBERAL" CREDENTIALS AND IMPUGNED HIS HONESTY. HE REPEATED, WITHOUT REVEALING DETAILS, PREVIOUS ALLEGATIONS THAT EX-FOREIGN MINISTER HOHAMED MASMOUDI AHD INDEED BROUGHT IN BOTH LIBYAN AND ALGERIAN MONEY TO FUEL THE UGTT SHOWDOWN WITH THE GOT. HE ALSO SAID HE WAS BUSY WITH HIS MANDATE FROM HIS FATHER TO EXPOSE CORRUPTION IN PUBLIC LIFE. END SUMMARY.

2. SECURITY SITUATION: I ASKED BOURGUIBA,JR. HOW HE FELT THE SECURITY SITUATION STOOD AT PRESENT. HE SAID THAT, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF A FEW SECONDARY SCHOOLS, THE  
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COUNTRY WAS QUITE AND IN A SHORT TIME THE SECURITY MEASURES IN FORCE COULD PROBABLY BE RELAXED. BY THIS WEEKEND, I ASKED, REFERRING TO CURRENT RUMORS THAT THE CURFEW WOULD BE ENDED BY MOULED (PROPHET'S BIRTHDAY, FEBRUARY 20)? HE DECLINED TO BE SPECIFIC.

3. THE DEMONSTRATIONS IN THE LYCEES THIS WEEK HAVE

FOLLOWED A PATTERN ACCORDING TO BOURGUIBA, JR.: A GROUP OF YOUNG MEN, USUALLY IN THEIR TWENTIES, NOT CONNECTED WITH THE SCHOOL, WILL APPEAR DURING RECESS PERIODS, START SHOUTING THAT THE GOVERNMENT MUST BE MADE TO PAY FOR THE DEATH OR SERIOUS WOUNDING OF SO-AND-SO, NAMING A STUDENT FROM THE SCHOOL WAS A VICTIM OF THE RECENT RIOTS. ALLEGATIONS OF NIGHT BURIALS WITHOUT PARENTAL NOTIFICATION ARE A COMMON AND UNFOUNDED CHARGE. A STRIKE IS CALLED. POLICE ARE SUMMONED. STONES ARE THROWN AND OUT COME NIGHT STICKS OF THE OUTNUMBERED POLICE. A SMALL GROUP OF AGITATORS HAS BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR MOST OF THE DEMONSTRATIONS IN THE TUNIS AREA, BUT THEY ARE GRADUALLY BEING APPREHENDED.

4. BOURGUIBA, JR. BELIEVES THAT WITHIN A FEW DAYS SECURITY WILL BE COMPLETELY RESTORED. HE SAID "WE ARE DETERMINED NOT TO ALLOW THEM TO TEAR DOWN WHAT WE HAVE BUILT UP HERE". HE CLAIMED "ANY GOVERNMENT'S FIRST DUTY IS THE PRESERVATION OF ITSELF AND THE NATIONAL SECURITY". HE WAS OPTIMISTIC THAT THE WOUNDS WOULD BE HEALED AND THAT PEACE AND PROGRESS COULD SOON BE RESUMED.

5. MESTIRI'S US TRIP: BOURGUIBA, JR. EVINCED GREAT INTEREST IN THE US VISIT OF AHMED MESTIRI, LEADER OF THE SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC GROUP. WAS IT TRUE, HE ASKED, THAT MESTIRI WAS SCHEDULED TO MEET WITH SECRETARY VANCE? I  
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SIAD I DOUBTED THIS, UNLESS MESTIRI HAD CHANGED HIS MIND IN RECENT DAYS, AS HE HAD PERSONALLY TOLD ME TEN DAYS AGO HE WOULD NOT HAVE ANY APPOINTMENTS AT THE DEPARTMENT AS THAT WOULD TEND TO POLITICIZE HIS VISIT. THIS WEEK, FEBRUARY 13, HE AGAIN TOLD ME AT LUNCH THAT HE HAD NO IDEA WHOM HE WOULD BE MEETING DURING HIS WASHINGTON STAY, BUT BELIEVED HIS HOSTS WERE ARRANGING CONTACTS. HE ASKED ME WHO WAS SPONSORING THE MESTIRI VISIT. I TOLD HIM IT WAS THE COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN TUNISIA AND RECOUNTED THE CLARK-FALK-SCHAAR EXPERIENCE LAST JUNE WHEN THEY WERE PRESENT WHEN POLICE PREVENTED THE INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC LIBERTIES. THIS, I SAID, HAD BEEN VIEWED AT THE TIME PERHAPS A SMALL THING TO GET BUT IT WAS CONTINUING TO CAUSE ADVERSE REPERCUSSIONS GENERATED BY THE THREE PROMINENT AMERICANS WHO WERE PRESENT. I REMINDED HIM THAT I HAD PREVIOUSLY TOLD HIM OF MY DEMARCH TO EX-FOREIGN MINISTER CHATY UNDER INSTRUCTIONS EXPRESSING US REGRET THAT THE JUNE 10 MEETING HAD BEEN BANNED. HE ALSO SEEMED DISTRESSED TO KNOW THAT MESTIRI WAS DEPARTING FOR PARIS EN ROUTE TO NEW YORK AT JUST ABOUT THE TIME OF OUR MEETING.

6. BOURGUIBA, JR. (WHO WAS NOT IN THE GOVERNMENT AT THE TIME) ADMITTED THAT THE GOT HAD HANDLED THAT EVENT BADLY, BUT HE THOUGHT IT RIDICULOUS THAT SLZ A GROUP OF AMERICANS COULD BE TAKEN IN BY "YOUR FRIEND MESTIRI, WHO IS NO LIBERAL, EVEN IF HE IS MASQUERADING AS OPE NOW". SOMEDAY HE WOULD TELL ME HOW PRESONERS WERE TREATED WHILE MESTIRI WAS MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR AND OF THE POLICE TECHNIQUES USED WHEN "THAT OTHER GREAT LIBERAL, TAHAR BELKHODJA" WAS DIRECTOR OF THE SURETE. IF MESTIRI EVER COMES TO POWER BOURGUIBA, JR. SAID, I WOULD SEE NOW SOON HE WOULD BECOME "A ROBESPIERRE". IF I WANTED A GLIMPSE OF THE REAL MESTIRI HE WOULD GIVE ME A CERIFIED COPY OF A DOCUMENT THERE ON DESK SIGNED BY MESTIRI AS INTERIOR MINISTER CONVEYING TO HABIB ACHOUR A PARCEL OF RICH FARMLAND FOR 1300 DINARS  
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LAND THAT HAD BEEN ACQUIRED ONLY A FEW MONTHS EARLIER BY THE GOT FOR 6000 DINARS.

7. HE WENT ON, SAYING THAT HE WOULD LOVE TO BE IN AN AMERICAN AUDIENCE WHEN MESTIRI OPENED HIMSELF TO QUESTIONS, AS HE HAD ONE QUESTION TO POSE THAT WOULD DISCREDIT MESTIRI COMPLETELY. WOULD I LIKE TO SUPPLY THE QUESTION TO WASHINGTON? I REPLIED I WOULD RATHER NOT. HE TOLD ME HIS WOULD THINK ABOUT DENDING IT TO AMBASSADOR HEDDA.

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R 161540Z FEB 78  
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AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TUNIS 1220

8. FOREIGN INVOLVEMENT: I DECIDED TO TELL BOURGUIBA, JR. THAT I HAD SEEN MESTIRI THREE TIMES IN THE PAST COUPLE OF WEEKS AND HAD FOUND THAT HE WAS MUCH LESS AT ODDS WITH MANY GOT POLICIES THAN I HAD IMAGINED. THE GOT, I SIAD, MIGHT DO WORSE THAN HAVE MESTIRI LEAD ITS OPPOSITION AND HE HAD TOLD ME THAT, WHEN THE GOT PRODUCES EVIDENCE THAT THERE ACTUALLY WAS FOREIGN INVOLVEMENT IN A PLOT AGAINST IT, HE AND ALL OTHER TUNISIANS WOULD RALLY AROUND THE GOVERNMENT. BOURGUIBA JR. SAID, "HE'S GOING TO GET PROOF. HE'S GOING TO GET PROOF SOON".

9. I SAID, REFERRING TO AN EARLIER CONVERSATION WITH BOURGUIBA, JR., THAT I WAS AWARE OF HIS SERIOUS CHARGES ABOUT LIBYAN INVOLVMENT, BUT THAT MESTIRI HAD SHOWN AN INTEREST IN POSSIBLE ALGERIAN INVOLVMENT. HAD HERE BEEN ANY? "YES", HE REPLIED, "MASMOUDI BROUGHT IN ALGERIAN AS WELL AS LIBYAN MONEY TO FINANCE THINGS". THE PROOF IS CONCLUSIVE AND IT WILL GE USED AT THE RIGHT TIME, HE SAID.

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10. CORRUPTION: COMMENTING ON THE ACHOUR/MESTIRI FARMLAND ALLEGATION, I SAID I WAS SURPRISED AT THE NEWS, BECAUSE IN MY PREVIOUS TOUR IN TUNISIA I HAD ALWAYS BEEN IMPRESSED WITH THE RELATIVE LACK OF CORRUPTION HERE AND HAD LONG BOASTED OF TI. SINCE MY RETURN AS AMBASSADOR, HOWEVER, I HAD BEEN APPALED BY THE RUMORS OF CORRUPTION I HAD HEARD. BOURGUIBA, JR. TOLD ME IT WAS SAY BUT UNFORTUNATELY TRUE NOW. HE THEN STATED THAT HIS FATHER HAD FOUND THE GROWTH IN CORRUPT PRACTICES HARD TO ACCPET AND HAD CHARGED HIM PERSONALLY TO FOLLOW DOWN EVIDENCES OF CORRUPTION AND BRING THOSE QUILTY TO JUSTICE. HE INTENDS TO DO JUST THAT, HE SIAD, AND HIS CAMPAIGN IS ALREADY UNDERWAY.

11. COMMENT: BOURGUIBA, JR. SEEMS TO ENJOY HIS NEW ROLE IN PUBLIC LIFE AND DOES NOT MIND AT ALL BEING LABLED A "HARD-LINER". HE EXUDES, HOWEVER, A ZEST FOR VINDICTIVENESS AND LEAVES ME WITH THE IMPRESSION THAT GREAT EXPOSES ARE READY TO BE UNVEILED. USED AGAINSTH ONLY PLITICAL ENEMIES THIS IS AN OLD TRICK WHICH WILL PROBABLY HAVE ONLY LIMITED SUCCESS. IF HIS ANTI-CORRUPTION CAMPAINGN WILL BE EXTENDED, HOWEVER, TO SOME OF THE FAT CATS HEADING PARASATAL ORGANIZATIONS

AND CERTAIN PRIVATE ENTERPRISES THE REGIME COULD MAKE  
ITSELF POPULAR WITH THE MAN IN THE STREET. THE  
QUESTION OF FOREIGN INVOLVEMENT HAS BEEN MUCH BRUITED  
BUT NOTHING HAS BEEN PUBLISHED YET IN DETAIL. CON-  
SIDERING THE DAMAGE IT COULD DO TO RELATIONS WITH  
ALGERIA AND LIBYA IT MAY NEVER BE. MASMOUDI, TOE  
REAL BETE-NOIR, REMAINS AT LIBERTY AS FAR AS WE KNOW.  
MULCAHY

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## Message Attributes

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